

NINEVEH
AND OTHER
POEMS

GEORGE
SYLVESTER
VIERECK

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A Few Critical Opinions

Personal and Journalistic, American and German, on the Poetical Work of



BY PERMISSION THEATRE MAGAZINE

George Sylvester Viereck

Whose Complete Poems, including those originally written in German, are now published under the title of

NINEVEH

& Other Poems

The Englishing, for this volume, of the German Poems which brought him his original world-wide celebrity was done personally by the poet.

12mo, \$1.20 net. (Postage, 10 cents)

MOFFAT, YARD & COMPANY, NEW YORK

GEORGE SYLVESTER, VIERECK

GEORGE SYLVESTER VIERECK was born in Munich, December 31, 1884. His father, Louis Viereck, for years a prominent member of the German Reichstag, came to America about ten years ago as the New York correspondent of a Berlin newspaper, and is now the publisher of a New York German monthly, "Der Deutsche Vorkämpfer." His mother, Laura Viereck, is a native of California and her husband's first cousin.

Coming to America at the age of twelve, Viereck attended the New York public schools and graduated, in 1906, from the College of the City of New York. In July following he joined the staff of "Current Literature," under Edward Jewitt Wheeler, and is now associate editor, conducting the dramatic department.

He began to write for newspapers in German at the age of thirteen, and has contributed a great deal of prose, verse and fiction to the New York "Staats Zeitung," as well as to the Berlin papers. He continued writing in German until three years ago, when he definitely adopted the English language. He collected his German poems in 1904 and published them under the title of "Gedichte." The edition was a very small one and had little sale, but it instantly made him celebrated. His genius was recognized at once throughout Germany, and, to a less extent, America, and he became the subject of many articles in reviews and critical journals on both sides of the sea. He began to receive personal letters from men of celebrity, finding himself, within a few months after the book's publication, in correspondence with a growing circle of rare minds. Some idea of the reception given this little book may be had from a perusal of the brief extracts, here given, from a few of the countless criticisms and appreciations which it provoked.

Within a few months after the book's publication, the celebrated house of Cotta, at Stuttgart, the publishers of Goethe and Schiller, expressed an interest in the young poet, and Ludwig Fulda took the manuscript to Germany to show it to them, the result being their publication of a larger work, made up of the original book with many newer poems. This appeared at the end of 1906, under the title of "Niniveh und Andere Gedichte," Moffat, Yard & Company, of New York, at the same time having in preparation the English edition, with the further addition of poems written originally in English for American magazines. The first American magazine, by the way, to publish a poem by Mr. Viereck was the "Century."

In the autumn of 1906, Mr. Viereck published a small volume of plays entitled, "A Game at Love," and there will appear, in the late autumn, a psychological romance of a very unusual kind and quality. All his books will be published simultaneously in English and German.

PERSONAL OPINION

Ludwig Fulda—

“A strong and original talent.”

Professor Calvin Thomas, of Columbia University—

“A most unusual phenomenon.”

Richard Le Gallienne in The North American Review—

“Indeed a poet . . . An original mind and an exceptionally forcible and magnetic literary gift.”

James Huneker in The North American Review—

“Among the late comers to our Parnassus we have William Vaughn Moody . . . and there is that youthful prodigy, George Sylvester Viereck, the bilingual poet, whose imaginative verse is shot through with splendors of Heine, Swinburne and Keats.”

Professor W. P. Trent, of Columbia University (from a personal letter)—

“You seem to me to have the qualities of the true singing lyricist, and I hope you will continue to sing despite the fact that nowadays poetry is, in the main, its own reward.”

Dr. J. Fastenrath, Founder of the Cologne Flower Festivals, in the Koelner Tageblatt—

“His poems are bathed in music. They are as an echo from the Horsk. If Tannhäuser should again raise his voice, or if the legendary Heinrich of Ofterdingen could arise to take his part once more in the minstrel strife at the Wartburg, he might sing as Viereck. He is the German-American Catullus.”

Professor Hugo Münsterberg, of Harvard University (from a personal letter)—

“Your book of poems arouses the liveliest hopes. Many things in it are of a deep, pure melodic beauty.”

E. J. Wheeler in Current Literature—

“Some of his verses make one catch the breath with their audacity and unrestraint. But the genius of the writer is never in doubt. There is the sound of rushing torrents rather than of trickling rivulets in these pages, and one hears, with Herod in Wilde’s ‘Salome,’ the beating of mighty and mysterious pinions in the air.”

PERSONAL OPINION

Dr. W. E. Leonard, in the Boston Transcript—

“In maturity of art I know not where to find his parallel in English letters, unless in the Rowley poems of the marvelous boy who perished in his pride. . . . I am aware that any comparison of an obscure New York school-boy with Goethe and Byron must strike the reader unpleasantly, but the critical conscience should not wince at that. . . . On one reading you pronounce him a decadent. But if you read him again you must admit noble elements of thought and strength and pathos.”

Dr. A. Pulvermacher, in the New Yorker Staats Zeitung—

“In Viereck’s case the phenomenal happened that he felt his own wings grow while still a school boy, and even at that time gave us poems which, though reminiscent of Heine and Swinburne and the Pre-Raphaelites, were bold and brilliant manifestations of an elemental talent that already possessed an individuality of its own. . . . They are now bound in a wreath of strong exotic perfume . . . glowing colors . . . perfection in form . . . enchanting music. The three strongly original poems dedicated to the great city of New York are documentary evidence that he has taken root upon the soil of the New World and feels himself one with the city that has become his home.”

Professor Ernst Henrici, in the Leipziger Tageblatt—

“The name of Cotta, Viereck’s German publisher, is closely associated with those of Goethe and Schiller. Viereck is a child in appearance, a wearied man in thought, a true artist in creative ability. His poetry is universally human, if this term may be applied with propriety to the deeply morbid tendencies that at present holds sway over the Aryan races. And in spite of all that is morbid we find in these poems a blossoming and a perfect artistry of irresistible fascination. George Sylvester Viereck is a riddle, a riddle even to himself. Therefore, the symbol of the Egyptian Sphinx reoccurs again and again in his poems. What he brings us, in gorgeous raiment and with supreme mastery of form, is largely symbolism that admits of a variety of interpretation. . . . Viereck’s poems are masterpieces. They are masterpieces evincing bewitching

PERSONAL OPINION

powers of presentation, products of a Titanic inner fermentation, a world-encircling flight of thought . . . Viereck speaks of human sin and sorrow in terms of the first person because he is a lyrist. In reality he means Man."

A. von Ende, in Poet Lore—

"George Sylvester Viereck is a phenomenon for which there is no parallel in the history of the world's literature. By rare circumstance and training he struck out into paths unknown to his fellow poets in this country; neither has he much in common with youngest Germany abroad . . . Experience has had some share in shaping the elusive, puzzling individuality of this boy of twenty. Viereck's field of vision is narrow, but it has depth. Of the two forces that govern the world, hunger and love, he acknowledges only the latter. His conception of love is philosophical and intensely human. As in series of historical frescoes he unfolds in 'Aiogyne' the love of the Eternal Woman; every stanza is a perfect picture. The exotic exuberance of his imagination frequently bewilders, but never repels. There is historic versimilitude, there is concreteness in his imagery, but there is nothing forced or ponderous; he has the light touch of the true artist."

AMERICAN PRESS OPINION

The Dial—

"His work is certainly remarkable, and we have read with interest every line in the book. It has color, passion, music and imagination."

Charleston News and Courier—

"These poems belong to the most unique products of latter-day poetry. . . . They are at once subtle and passionate. Mr. Viereck has probed the depths of life in some of its phases."

New York Evening Post—

"For originality of conception and artistic distinction, the work of George Sylvester Viereck deserves special attention. . . . Remarkable for melody, imagery, eloquence and paganistic spirit."

AMERICAN PRESS OPINION

Chicago Examiner—

“Since the marvelous Chatterton, it is doubtful if there has appeared so mature a mind in so young a body as is displayed in the genius of Sylvester Viereck.”

New Yorker Echo—

“Nineveh, a symbolization of Manhattan in apocalyptic symbols, is one of the most interesting and most characteristic poems in the whole collection. Viereck sees even such unpoetic things as skyscrapers, subways and the elevated trains with the painter’s eye and imprisons them with the poet’s pen.”

Washington Post—

“These are the poems of a young German who is attracting attention by his work both in his native and adopted languages, for the author is now a citizen of the United States. The young poet undoubtedly manifests evidence of genius. If he does not suffer himself to be absorbed by the tide of erotic fancy that sweeps over his composition and trenches hard upon a form of neurotic mania, he will probably be heard from among the standards some day. Of late Mr. Viereck has been writing English verse which denotes much of the grace and rich fancy of his German lines.”

Sonntagsblatt der New Yorker Staats Zeitung—

“Great is the suggestive power of the poems of this youth of hardly twenty years. He is on his way to develop into a remarkable poetic individuality. His strength still lies in erotic poetry. A strikingly original poem of this kind is ‘Aioogyne.’ He touches in it on various erotic problems with delicate, artistic discretion, and without any prudishness. In atmosphere ‘Liebesnacht’ ranks even above ‘Aioogyne.’ This poem burns with a true Hellenic joy in the body. A dithyramb on the flesh it is, in which hate and love, twin-brethren, race in a mad orgy.”

GERMAN PRESS OPINION

National Zeitung (Berlin)—

“This is, indeed, true poetry. And one who, at age of twenty is able to combine such depth of feeling with such perfection of form, has surely been given the singing mouth.”

Hamburger Nachrichten—

“A remarkable achievement that represents, in German poetry at least, a new departure. There is in this book the rising of spring juices. It surprises at times by far-looking imagination and poignancy of expression.”

Berliner Neuste Nachrichten—

“We mark the growth of a poet. His throbbing passion will become a well-watched flame. His ardent thoughts will no longer be satisfied with the physical beauty of women, but also desire the soul. . . . In George Sylvester Viereck there is a seeker after God intoxicated with the cosmos. He perceives the undissolved residue in life and strives toward clearer heights. There is human and æsthetic yearning in his poems that compels attention.”

Literarisches Centralblatt für Deutschland (Leipzig)—

“Beauty in art and life, the joy of the senses, the glowing intoxication of youth—of all these he sings. To understand him one must read ‘Aiogyne,’ a composition equally perfect in form and content. Here the poet’s individuality and originality stand supremely revealed. True passion, profound emotion distinguish his other poems as well. Heine’s love songs and Shelley’s poems reoccur to one on reading Viereck, who is a kindred spirit to both. But he always retains his individuality.”

Allgemeine Zeitung (Munich)—

“Viereck’s book is a phenomenal and at the same time characteristic document of a youth. Exceptional circumstances and educational possibilities have enabled this young author to seek a road far from the common herd, not only from that of America, but of younger Germany also, with which indeed he has little in common. This son of an American mother and a father of German blood is an admirer of Swinburne and Wilde. With the former he has in common the passionate gift of feeling and expression; with the lat-

GERMAN PRESS OPINION

ter he shares a sophisticated æsthetic instinct, unflinching sense of form, and an acute critical power. The flow of his verses is wonderfully melodious. The charm of his poetry consists in the complete welding of substance and form. This makes him a true artist. What gives his muse physiognomy is his mental outlook. His field is narrow but it has depths."

Freie Presse (Vienna)—

"There is an uncanny maturity in the poems of this boy of twenty-two. Upon every page an extraordinary talent reveals itself. . . . With very mingled emotions and impressions the reader wanders through the collection as through some tropic wilderness where luxuriant poison-scented forests and secret glens full of primeval quiet succeed each other. Classic antiquity and Christian legend, Egyptian mysticism, and modern blasphemy, an intoxicated sense of beauty and infinite exaltation commingle. . . . If this exotic composition is characteristic of the development of 'Young America,' Viereck's poetry has a value beyond its intrinsic poetic character for the literary historian. But in itself it possesses a weird attraction. It is—if we may speak in this connection of dimension of space—in a sense a picture of the immense, not always pleasing, dimensions which lend a characteristic and peculiar flavor to all expressions of American life."

Vossische Zeitung (Berlin)—

"Viereck himself is, in a measure, under the influence of the modern movement in English literature, so that he may be called a member of the English Neo-Romantic school who uses the German language. Strangely mature experience, an ecstatic intoxication with life, ineffable yearning after beauty, delight in the Greek ideals of art, an orgy of soul and sense that passes from the complete expression of every instinct of the flesh to the devotional remorse and despair, mysticism and satanism, undue verbosity at times, and a coquetting with secrets and mystery—these are, for good or evil, the characteristics of Viereck's muse, as they are that of his English predecessors. In common with these, too, he possesses splendour of language and astonishing dexterity in the management of rhyme and rhythm."

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OTHER POEMS

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*OTHER
POEMS*

BY

*GEORGE SYLVESTER
VIERECK*

NEW YORK

MOFFAT, YARD & COMPANY

1907

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NEW YORK

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First Printing, April, 1907
Second Printing, July, 1907

To

Richard Le Gallienne

NOTE

The author desires to express his obligation to his friends, Mr. William Ellery Leonard and Mr. Ludwig Lewisohn, for their permission to reprint in the present collection their respective versions of "Prince Carnival" and "The Scarlet Flower." Nor can he send forth this book without a word of gratitude to his other friends, especially Mrs. Elsa Barker, Mr. A. I. du P. Coleman and Mr. Richard Le Gallienne, for helpful suggestion and generous assistance.

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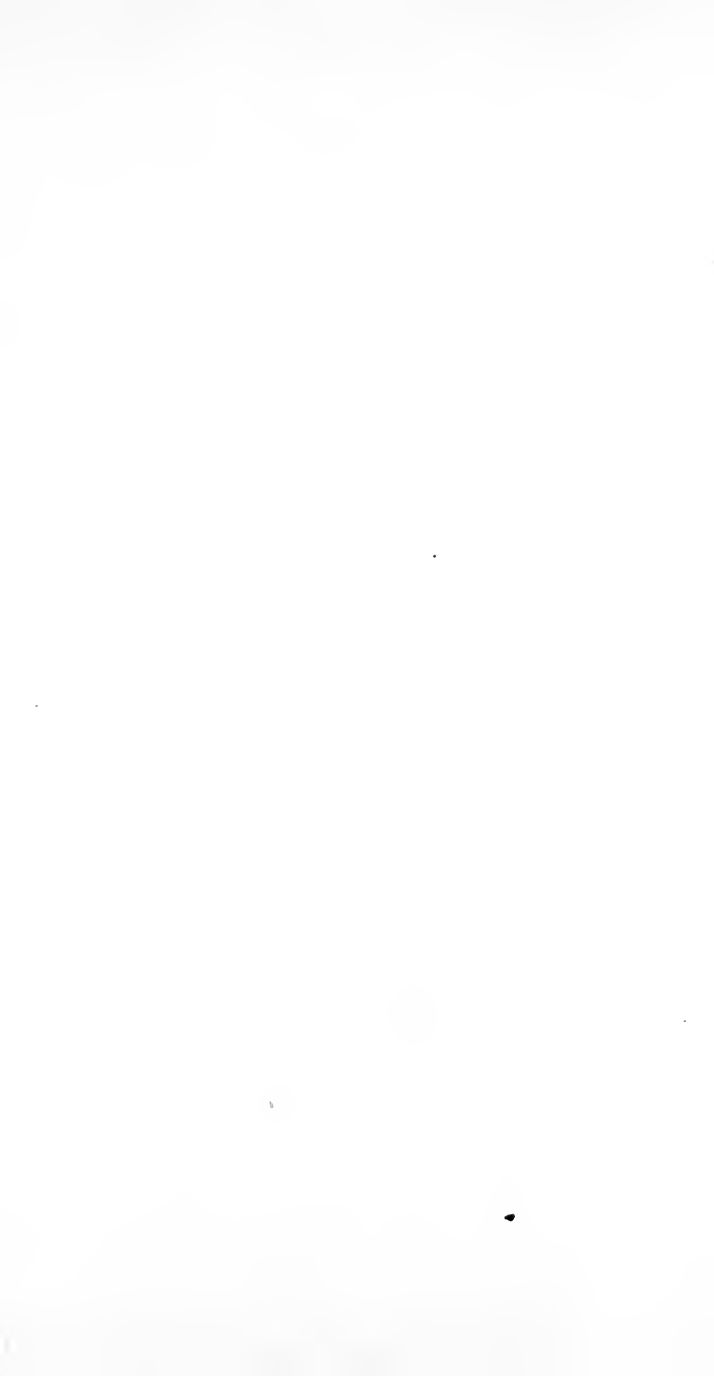
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PREFACE

THE splendid heritage of two languages has fallen to me from a German father and an American mother. My ears have listened to the music of two worlds. Many of the poems in the present collection were written in the language in which they are here presented. Others were originally composed in German and rewritten in English. The latter are as metals transmuted by verbal alchemy and, with the exception of two, in no sense translations. I cannot, therefore, claim, for any part of my work, the indulgence commonly granted to painstaking translators by benevolent critics. Each of my poems must be judged by whatever intrinsic value it may possess. It must also be judged as a whole. It must not be viewed from one narrow angle of vision—moral, æsthetic, or philosophic. The truth, I take it, has many sides. Art, like life, is Janus-faced. In fact, it has many faces. The hopelessly Puritanical attitude which has found its most characteristic utterance,

and—it was to be hoped—its extinction, in the pitiful voice of Robert Buchanan, is no more absurd than the affectation of those who, proclaiming their discipleship to art for art's sake, in reality crown pose with the diadem of emotion, and upon the throne of beauty set technique.

The question arises: Is there any positive test of literary achievement? Matthew Arnold's definitions, set forth in his introduction to Ward's "English Poets," are suggestive, if unsatisfactory. In every poet's work we discover single poems, which, by common consent, outshine their companions without necessarily excelling in earnestness of purpose or verbal beauty, rhythmic splendour or originality of conception. They throb with a mysterious vitality which, while it may elude definition, is unmistakably felt. Arnold's "touch-stones" of poetry fall under this category; likewise Leigh Hunt's "Jenny Kissed Me," Rossetti's "Blessed Damozel," Markham's "Man with the Hoe," Poe's "Raven," and Oscar Wilde's "Ballad of Reading Gaol." I have purposely chosen dissimilar examples. The pieces have, however, one quality in common, which, for lack of a better name, I should like to term finality of expression. That is, they solve without a remainder the equation between thought and utterance. They express,

with supreme aptitude, finally and for all time, some mundane experience, some note in the infinite scale. No latter poet can add to them, or detract. Their impressiveness is enduring, their vitality ultimate. The measure of a poet's art is the frequency with which he attains or, at least, approaches finality of expression.

Form and content in poetry are co-ordinate. In order to achieve finality it is essential that the metric coat shall fit exactly. Existing conventional forms, like ready-made garments, may at times fulfil the requirements; frequently they will not. It then behoves a poet to modify them or, better still, to create new forms intimately adapted to the exigencies of the occasion. Though the instinctive sureness of Milton's touch enabled him to set aside traditional restrictions, the eighteenth century crushed freedom within form so effectually that, in spite of the romantic revival, our poets have not, as a rule, followed in his steps. Thought is now stretched out, now mangled upon the Procrustean bed of conventional music. Men have forgotten that rhyme and metre are only means to an end. In art, at least, the end justifies the means. The poet's ear, not the number of feet, is the plenipotent arbiter of form, and the melodious impressiveness of a poem as a whole, the final cri-

terion of poetic technique. The poet of the future will be an impressionist. By unheard-of devices he will wrest new music from the language, and raise a crop of roses from gardens hitherto neglected and sterile. He will also utilise, not repudiate, the resources already at hand, and put to a nobler and broader application the sonant heirloom of the past. It is the freedom of Pindar for which I plead, not the freedom of Whitman. I plead for this freedom, not only in the ode, but in all poetry. Thus form will not be overthrown, but more firmly and exquisitely established. Not the line or stanza, but the whole poem will be the unit of the new poetry, and each poem will possess a rhythmic individuality unique to itself.

In the majority of my own poems I made concession to time-honoured canons. Then, instinctively, at first, I began to strive for a rhythmic speech more flexible, and, if possible, more musical. In "A Ballad of Sin" and "The Smile of the Sphinx" I was groping for the new form. In "Kakodaimon" I came nearer to it, and in "A Spring Blessing," "Art," "The Magic City" and "The Three Sphinxes" my efforts are most consciously directed and most fully developed. If I am right, I have extended the borderland of poetry into the domain of music on the one side, into that of the intellect on the other. The new

form, new in that it has never before been consciously applied, brings into play hidden possibilities of speech, and enables the authentic poet to multiply rhymes and rhythmic effects without straining the sense. The lyre, henceforth obeying only a master-hand, will slip from the grasp of the tyro, and poetry become once more the vehicle of great thought. The lyrist who fully adopts the new form and its practically limitless resources will accomplish for poetry what Wagner has accomplished for music. Along the lines here indicated lies the poetry of to-morrow.

GEORGE SYLVESTER VIERECK.



SALUTATION

THE SUPPLIANT

*Beyond the sea a land of heroes lies,
Of fairy heaths and rivers, mountains steep,
O'ergrown with vine—her memory I shall
keep*

*Most dear, her heritage most dearly prize.
But lo, a lad, I left her, and mine eyes
Fell on the sea-girt mistress of the deep,
What time my boy's heart heard as in a sleep
The choral walls of rhythmic beauty rise.*

*O lyric England, thee I call mine own;
With lyre and lute and wreath I come to
thee;
The realm is thine of song and of the sea,
And thy mouth's speech is heard from zone to
zone:
Turn not in scorn thine ivied brow from me,
Who am a suppliant kneeling at thy throne!*

PRAYER

*I stood upon the threshold; musical
Reverberant footsteps ghostlike came and
went,
And my lips trembled as magnificent
Before me rose a vision of that hall
Whereof great Milton is the mighty wall,
Shakespeare the dome with incense redolent,
Each latter singer precious ornament,
And Holy Writ the groundwork, bearing all.*

*"Lord," sobbed I, "take Thy splendid gift of
youth
For the one boon that I have craved so long:
Mould Thou my stammering accents and un-
couth,
With awful music raise and make me strong;
A living martyr of Thy vocal truth,
A resonant column in the House of Song!"*

PREMONITION.

*This is my singing season, and the dearth
Of music ended; I am pregnant thus
With sound and colour, and melodious
Mine unborn poems clamour after birth.
Perchance, arising from the tuneless earth
To bring sweet gifts of cadence unto us,
Some vocal brother to Theocritus
Inspires my lips with his diviner worth.*

*Or yet, some ghostly elder singer's breath
Is floating to me, and strange voices ring
On my soul's ear with sound that quickeneth:
"Build now or never," say they, and they
bring
The premonition of an early death
That bids me hasten with my harvesting.*



NINEVEH

PRELUDE

THE EMPIRE CITY

HUGE steel-ribbed monsters rise into the air
Her Babylonian towers, while on high
Like gilt-scaled serpents glide the swift trains
by,

Or, underfoot, creep to their secret lair.
A thousand lights are jewels in her hair,
The sea her girdle, and her crown the sky,
Her life-blood throbs, the fevered pulses fly,
Immense, defiant, breathless she stands there

And ever listens in the ceaseless din,
Waiting for him, her lover who shall come,
Whose singing lips shall boldly claim their
own

And render sonant what in her was dumb:
The splendour and the madness and the sin,
Her dreams in iron and her thoughts of
stone.

I



NINEVEH

O NINEVEH, thy realm is set
Upon a base of rock and steel
From where the under-rivers fret
High up to where the planets reel.

Clad in a blazing coat of mail,
Above the gables of the town
Huge dragons with a monstrous trail
Have pillared pathways up and down.

And in the bowels of the deep
Where no man sees the gladdening sun,
All night without the balm of sleep
The human tide rolls on and on.

* * *

The Hudson's mighty waters lave
In stern caress thy granite shore,
And to thy port the salt sea wave
Brings oil and wine and precious ore.

Yet if the ocean in its might
Should rise confounding stream and bay,
The stain of one delirious night
Not all the tides can wash away.

* * *

Thick pours the smoke of thousand fires,
Life throbs and beats relentlessly—
But lo, above the stately spires
Two lemans: Death and Leprosy.

What fruit shall spring from such embrace?
Ah, even thou wouldst quake to hear!
He bends to kiss her loathsome face,
She laughs—and whispers in his ear.

Sit not too proudly on thy throne,
Think on thy sisters, them that fell;
Not all the hosts of Babylon
Could save her from the jaws of hell.

* * *

II



Through the long alleys of the park
On noiseless wheels and delicate springs,
Glide painted women fair and dark,
Bedecked with silks and jewelled things.

In peacock splendour goes the rout
With shrill, loud laughter of the mad—
Red lips to suck thy life-blood out,
And eyes too weary to be sad!

Their feet go down to shameful death,
They flaunt the livery of their wrong,
Their beauty is of Ashtoreth,
Her strength it is that makes them strong.

* * *

Behold thy virgin daughters, how
They know the smile a wanton wears;
And oh! on many a boyish brow
The blood-red brand of murder flares.

* * *

See, through the crowded streets they fly,
Like doves before the gathering storm.
They cannot rest, for ceaselessly
In every heart there dwells a worm.

They sing in mimic joy, and crown
Their temples to the flutes of sin;
But no sweet noise shall ever drown
The whisper of the worm within.

* * *

They revel in the gilded line
Of lamplit halls to charm the night,
But think you that the crimson wine
Can veil the horror from their sight?

Ah, no—their staring eyes are led
To where it lurks with hideous leer:
Therefore the women flush so red,
And all the men are white with fear.

* * *

As in a mansion vowed to lust,
Where wantons with their guests make free,
'Tis thus thou humblest in the dust
Thy queenly body, Nineveh!

Thy course is downward; 'tis the road
To sins that even where disgrace
And shameful pleasure walk abroad
Dare not unmask their shrouded face!

Surely at last shall come the day
When these that dance so merrily
Shall watch with terrible faces gray
Thy doom draw near, O Nineveh!

* * *

III



I, too, the fatal harvest gained
Of them that sow with seed of fire
In passion's garden—I have drained
The goblet of thy sick desire.

I from thy love had bitter bliss,
And ever in my memory stir
The after-savours of thy kiss—
The taste of aloes and of myrrh.

And yet I love thee, love unblessed
The poison of thy wanton's art;
Though thou be sister to the Pest
In thy great hands I lay my heart!

And when thy body Titan-strong
Writhes on its giant couch of sin,
Yea, though upon the trembling throng
The very vault of Heaven fall in;

And though the palace of thy feasts
Sink crumbling in a fiery sea—
I, like the last of Baal's priests,
Will share thy doom, O Nineveh.

THE BOOK OF IDOLS

TO * * *

THE flowers I plucked, with youthful freedom
straying

Through fields with dreamy poppies sown,
I bring, a priest sad scornful homage paying
Before an idol-throne!

If careless you should please to turn the pages
In which my soul its growth can trace,
'Twill bring, the memory of those early stages,
A smile across your face.

And if some day the shadows come to linger,
And care press down your diadem,
Bethink you sometimes of the boyish singer
That kissed your mantle's hem.

You took my all when youth was free for
roving,

Youth that so short a space endures:
Then take these gifts of hating and of loving,
These songs—for they are yours!

THE DUMB IDOL

“ . . . Upon a golden throne sate a gleaming idol. And it had a soul . . . But those who came thither knew it not. And they were not to know it. For it was the awful punishment of this dumb idol that it had a soul and might not reveal it, if it would not suffer the torments of the lost. Then both Heaven and Hell lamented its immeasurable sorrow which neither could assuage, because it was too deep for the light and too deep for the darkness.”

—OLD LEGEND.

FAR, far away, within a lonely vale

There stands a temple old—so old and gray,
Unwarmed by rays of sunshine; only pale
Cold moonbeams o'er it play.

Yet nearer draw and see what crimson flood

Of light streams through the windows: never
rose

Could flush so deep a red, but that high Blood
For sin that ever flows.

Around the altar, deep in silent prayer,
The faithful kneel beside the ivory shrine
That still enfolds, with all the ancient care,
An image once divine.

A king draws near in purple robes of state,
Bearing the sceptre of his sovereignty;
A bishop comes, and all around him wait
His priests full reverently.

So as the years go by, they come to plead
Before the altar, happier to return,
But for the poor dumb idol 'tis decreed
No light of hope shall burn.

It looks not down upon the kneeling throng;
But from its staring stony eyes there go
Great waves of torturing anguish, not less
strong
For being silent woe.

Ah, deeper woe than ever man has known,
Ah, ceaseless longing that no sacrifice
Ever assuages—there above the throne
Poor pleading, helpless eyes!

At times it seems the features cold and set
Some gentler thought of passing hope would
tell;

And one could fancy that a tear made wet
The cheeks immovable.

Yet, clasped like some strange book of sorcery,
Those lips can never speak. The curse must
come

That sterner godheads have pronounced on thee,
Sad idol pale and dumb!

Full many a Christ has trod the long steep way
Unto all souls God's mercy to impart;
Surely the sad-eyed Nazarene shall lay
His hand upon thy heart?

His grace is shed abroad from rise of sun
Unto the furthest islands of the west:
Shalt thou, when all the healing work is done,
Thou only, not be blest?

* * *

Slow cycles roll against time's timeless reef,
(The eyes of Mary shine with mercy mild!)
But still the idol stands in silent grief,
Helpless, unreconciled.

Thus shall it wait, speechless for evermore,
 Until at last the fateful trumpet call,
And all the lands and all the oceans o'er,
 The Dusk of Idols fall!

KAKODAIMON

THE mockery of thy lips adored,
Thy lovely languid head
Enwreathed with poppies red
Is my loadstone:
Because thou art cruel, therefore be my Lord,
Kakodaimon!

Thy glorious body, unto me made known,
Is like a stately fane of alabaster
Where in procession, to thy praise alone,
'Mid torches' glimmer and organ's pealing tone,
Pass scarlet Sin, and Shame, and black
Disaster,
Kakodaimon!

Then blaze the windows bright
With weird unearthly light;
The outer throng fall prostrate at the sight,
But guess not whence it is,
Nor hear the scornful hiss
Of thy contempt upon their offerings
blown,
Kakodaimon!

Ah, but I know, and yet I have not gone—
Stand boldly fronting this my destiny,
That my reward must my damnation be,
To wait in silence for the dread decree
And find no mercy at Jehovah's throne,
Kakodaimon!

Thine is the blame if o'er my head shall roll
His thunderous wrath: yet if one spake
"Disown
Thy love, or bid farewell to Mary's Son!"
I should not grasp the priest's absolving stole,
But, choosing, at thy worshipped feet lie
prone,
O splendid evil genius of my soul.
Kakodaimon!

PRINCE CARNIVAL

JINGLING bells and cracking whip,
Laughter and jest on every lip!—
Thou drew'st thy gorgeous mantle tight—
But lo! I marked and knew at sight.

In all this dazzling mirth the best,
A golden star upon thy breast,
The kingly sceptre in thy hand,
Thou gazest on thy fairyland.

Yet as thou tak'st the golden wine,
A glory round thy head will shine;
Then all will know along the hall
That it is thou—Prince Carnival!

A shout goes up from row to row,
The viols scrape and trumpets blow.
The quick hand swings the whip with art—
Thy laughter masters every heart.

But as into thine eyes I peep,
There looks on me a woe so deep—
Unutterable and hidden all,
Unhappy Prince of Carnival.

'Tis but a mask, this jesting part!
Mankind's eternal pain thou art!
Once in the year, like storm long pent,
Forth bursts thy heart-sick merriment.

An inward fire feverishly
Tortures and goads the blood in thee,
That on the moment thou dost forget
How poor, how sick thy heart is yet.

Therefore my heart it burns for thee,
Thou beautiful prince of faery,
And oh, my love, my Prince, is great—
As boundless as impassionate.

It is the deepest of all things
How man unto his sorrow clings—
His breast's own pain, supreme through all;
So I love thee, Prince Carnival.

THE SMILE OF THE SPHINX

AND one day of late a dream oppressed me . . .
And in dreams through the long streets I
wandered.

(Through the streets with many footsteps
throbbing!)

And a burden lay upon my heart,
And my weary eyelids sadly quivered,
And a sob rose choking in my throat,
And the shadow of some rare disaster
Weighed upon the houses of the town,
And encircled by the sombre shadows,
Sombre men with tortured faces walked
(Pallid men with weary tortured faces!)
Through the streets unending to and fro.
Midnight sounded solemn from the tower,
And the stillness trembled as it smote . . .
Further went I on the wonted pathway
Further . . . further . . . through the dark-
ling night.

Dark foreboding seized upon my heart-
strings . . .

Yet no swifter would I tread the path,
The appalling, vaguely-boded tidings
Later, ah! a little later, to discover.
Nightly pilgrims of the monster-city
Stared behind me dimly wondering.

And a woman, dark of hair and feature,
With the gleaming of rapacious teeth,
And her scarlet feather ever nodding,
Seemed to smile . . .

Yet I went still onward, undeterred,
Ever onward, ever, ever onward,
Onward, onward through the darkling town.

And at last I came where stands thy dwelling;
Ever slower grew my lagging footsteps,
Ever slower . . .

Then my eyes beheld the sombre hangings;
They beheld the heavy mourning symbol
That men hang upon their dreary doorways
When a dead man slumbers in the house . . .

Slowly I ascended the steep stairway,
Pressed upon the bell with trembling fingers,
And the heart rose leaden in my throat.

Footsteps . . .

And a woman with sad tear-stained eyes
(Pallid woman with sad tear-stained eyes!)
Set thy door wide open at my summons.
Neither spoke a word: I knew already
What for me within the house was waiting.

But she beckoned and I followed her.
Slow and silent then the stairs we mounted,
Till I stood before thy chamber door,
Where a breath of incense and of roses
Sweetly, sadly floated out to meet me,
And an icy shudder filled my veins . . .

On the bed half hid by fragrant blossoms,
As in prayer thine hands so gently folded,
Thou wast sleeping. Softly I came nearer
One last kiss upon thy mouth to press.
But upon thy pallid, silent features
Was a smile . . . a weird and ghostly smile,
Was a pallid, a mysterious smile,
Past explaining, strange as thou wert strange.
And it seemed as though thou wouldst have
 spoken,
Given the hidden meaning of the riddle
That the riddle of thine own existence,
That the riddle of all riddles is—
When too soon the icy hand of Death
Came and sealed for evermore thy lips.
And the hour-hand of the quaint old timepiece
That had vexed me with its solemn ticking
When of old within the room I tarried
Stood at twelve . . . I shuddered . . . and I
 knew.

But the pallid woman now was speaking
(Ah, so pale, and eyes with grief so heavy!)
Seeing how I stood in helpless sorrow:
"Yes, at twelve it was . . . when failed the
 light,
And throughout the house a tremour passed,
And a dark and sorrow-bringing angel
Stirred the heavy air with noiseless pinions,
And I heard a long, despairing struggle,
Then a fall (ah, dull and heavy fall!) . . .
Then a cry (ah, such a cry!) . . . And then
Death, a shadow, brooded on the bed."

And again I looked upon thy face,
And again I saw the same mysterious
Pallid smile upon thy quiet features,
And remembered how one night of June
I had seen it . . . flickering . . . on thy lips.

And anew I went into the night
From the house bedraped with signs of mourn-
 ing,
And the woman with the weary voice
(Pallid woman with wan tearful eyelids!)
And the clock, its hands at twelve arrested,
And the bed where Death kept solemn vigil,
And the couch upon which one lay dead
Who was dear upon this earth to me.

Ah, but still forever I am seeking
For the answer to the darksome riddle,
That Death's hand with icy touch has closed,
And that now eternity keeps locked.

And wherever my sad footsteps wander,
Evermore I see that pallid smile,
See upon thy lips the hopeless riddle
Past explaining, strange as thou wert strange,
That the riddle of all riddles is!

WHEN IDOLS FALL

FOUL night-birds brood in fearsome throng
About the path that I must tread:
Thou art not what I thought thee long,
And oh, I would that I were dead!
Less bitter was the gall they ran
To offer Christ upon the tree,
Or the salt tears He shed for man,
Deserted in Gethsemane.

For thou wast all the god I had
While months on months were born and died,
Thy lips' sweet fragrance made me glad
As holy bells at eventide.
Aye, for thy sake, my god on earth,
I joyed to suffer all I could,
And counted as of lesser worth
The chalice of the Saviour's blood!

Entranced I knelt before thy shrine
And filled love's chalice, I thy priest;
With flowers as crimson as the wine
I decked our altar for the feast.
I gave thee more than love may give,
First-fruits of song, truth, honour—all!
Too much I loved thee: I must live
To see God's awful justice fall.

I bleed beneath a wound the years
That heal all sorrow shall not heal;
O barren waste, O fruitless tears!
I gave thee mine eternal weal.
My idol crumbled in the dust
'(Ah, that I lived that day to see!)
There came a sudden piercing thrust,
And all my life was dead in me!

Thou spak'st a single hideous word,
And that one word became the knoll
Of all that made life dear, and blurred
The lines of good within my soul.
Better the plague-spots ringed me round,
The hangman gave the fatal sign,
Than that such monstrous word should sound
From lips that once I held divine!

A veil of darkness hid the sun,
Night fell, and stars from heaven were hurled,
For when this fearful thing was done,
It spelt the ruin of a world.
The string whose music won my bays
Snapped with a blinding thrill of pain;
Through all the everlasting days
I shall not hear its note again.

Amidst the gloom I grope for song;
The fires die out that passion fed:
Thou art not what I thought thee long,
And oh! I would that I were dead!
Yet worse than all the pain of loss,
The smile that seals a traitor's will,
Is this: that knowing gold for dross,
I cannot choose but love thee still!

THE SPHINX

I

WITHIN a sultry desert land,
Where neither flowers nor shadows are,
Hid to the breast in shifting sand
There stands an image secular.

Where Pharaoh's sceptre gave the laws,
The thing that held me captive rests,
Strange compound of a panther's claws
And of a woman's rounded breasts.

Thus stood she when the princess found
The infant in his secret bed;
Thus, when the young Bithynian wound
The death-wreath for his golden head.

And monarchs came with her to dwell
On whom mad dreams had laid their ban,
From whose imperial shoulders fell
The purple cloak of Hadrian.

II

O strange beyond the strangest fears
And hopes and ancient questionings,
That I who am so young in years
Have loved the oldest of all things!

III

Ah, fount of pleasure salt with tears,
Storehouse of cunning, well of guile!
Love of my boyhood's troubled years,
Gray silent Sphinx beside the Nile!

No hoard of silver I possessed,
No purple brought from Tyrian mart,
So, as love's guerdon, from my breast
With fevered hand I tore the heart.

Thy granite flanks upon the gift
Closed with a mighty fluttering,
Then first within thee rose the swift
Pulsation of a living thing.

And I forgot beneath thy spell
Mine was the life within thee grown,
And mine the heart that leapt and fell
Illusory in thy breast of stone.

Mine was the folly, mine the tears
That wept the ending of my dream,
Love of my boyhood's troubled years,
Gray silent Sphinx beside the stream!

IV

O wanderer, stay where life is sweet,
And jubilant earth is glad of May,
Disturb not with incautious feet
The mystery of an elder day.

When we have sighed to fold our hands
And join the Pharaohs in the tomb,
She still shall stare across the sands
And hearken for the crack of doom!

A BALLAD OF SIN

A BALLAD OF SIN

IN dreams on a far-off shore I lay
 (Dreams that were full of dread),
Where the purple clouds of a dying day
 Shadowed a sea of red—
Shadowed a sea as red as the blood
Of one that was slain in his lustihood,
A sea as red as a lover's blood
Struck down in his amorous lustihood.

A silver shallop glides to and fro,
 Over the ghostly crimson sea,
 '(Over the ghostly crimson sea
I watch its oars as they come and go);
The wavelets quiver and gleam:
 No sounds are there that the silence break,
 But astern in the shallop's silvery wake
Strange circles swirl in the stream.

The moon shines down on the ghostly night,
But pale and dim is its faint, far light,
And now to the island the boat draws near
 '(My veins run cold with fear!),
And the shadows spring to the magic shore—

For each has known of a bliss before,
A sinful, sorrowful bliss before,
Of God and of man forbidden;
And each is wrapped in a robe of state,
These in the moonlight that come so late
(Where the quivering, shivering moonbeams
mate)

To their tryst on the island hidden.

Go further into the mystic shore
And see a castle rise,
A spirit-castle rise,
And a flood of light from the windows pour,
From all the shimmering windows pour,
And colour the moonlit skies;
And hark to the magic melodies
(The ringing, singing melodies)
That float o'er the waves as red as the blood
Of a lover slain in his lustihood.

The song goes deep to the inmost soul—
Its notes o'er the silent waters roll
In the heavy languorous pleading
Of a wanton will to which the grave
Never a moment of respite gave
And hearts that with love are bleeding.
(O ancient song of passionate dole,
Whose notes o'er the silent waters roll
In heavy languorous pleading!)

I am drawn by its might (there is none to save!)
To the midst of the castle hall;
And there, escaped from the cold, cold grave,
Sin holds its bacchanal
(Aye, there, escaped from the cold, cold grave,
Lust holds its bacchanal)—
And 'neath the flickering candle-light
The dance of the shadows has reached its
height!

They must renew, as the midnight chimes,
The kisses that a thousand times,
A thousand times and in far-off climes,
Have died on their lips enchanted:
The flowers that gleam in their tossing hair
Are painted like flowers that elsewhere
(Thousand times and in far-off climes)
Long ages ago were planted.
Heaven had no hand in the pageantry
Of the wondrous scene that was shown to me!

With songs of pleasure they tread the measure,
That throng so pale and wan—
These that of old for sinful pleasure
Through the gates of hell have gone,
Yet tossed forever on passion's flood
Come sailing over the sea of blood.

The queen of Egypt there I saw,
Tiberius and Caligula,
 In silks and purples flaunting;
Aholibah, Alaciel,
And she whose love came straight from hell
 Were there, and boldly vaunting
Her skill in transport lubricous,
The shameless wife of Claudius.

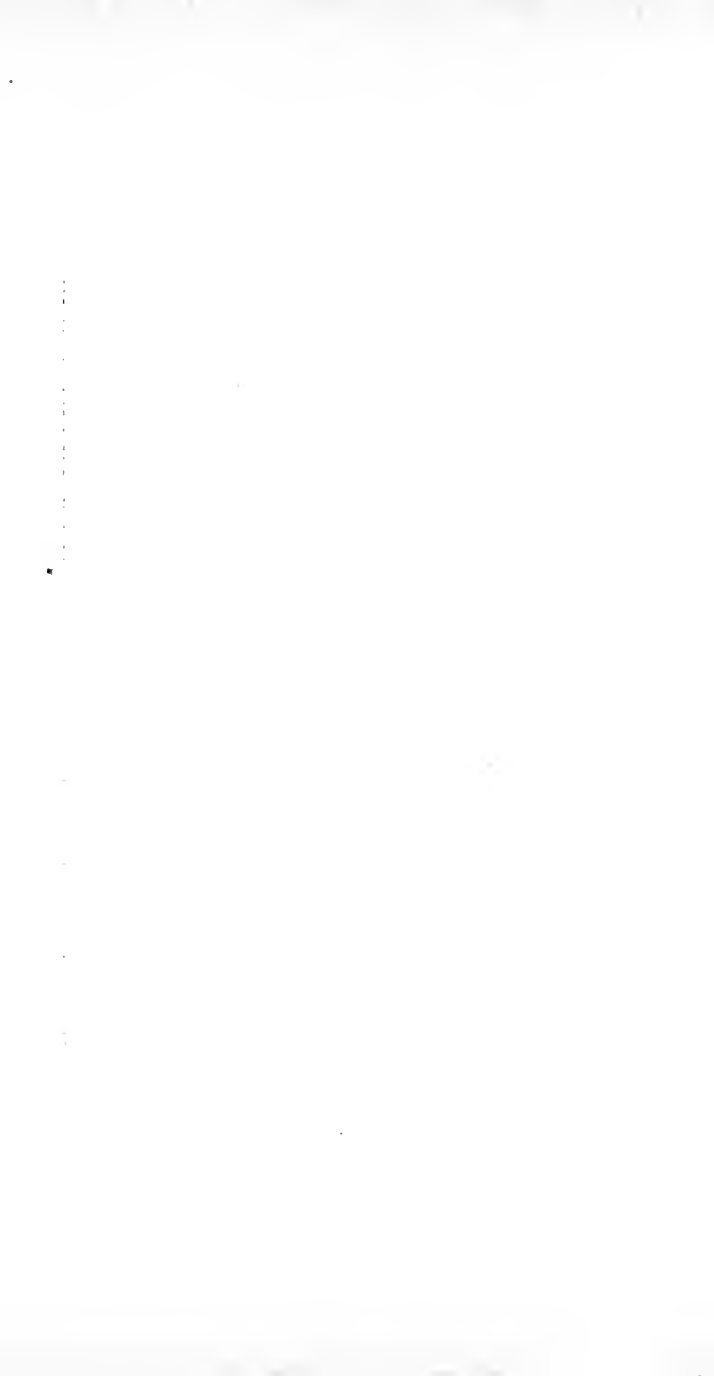
With bliss that is bitter, pain that is sweet
 Shudders each ghostly form,
And stirred alone by their flying feet
 The scented air grows warm.
Madly the dancers revel and sway
In the dazzling colours that round them play.

The fire that heaven has kindled dies
When the joys of sight from the straining eyes
 Death's endless night shall sever;
All vainly mounts the aspiring flame,
Each love that has a noble aim
 Bears death at its heart forever;
And only the love that flaunts in red
Lives on when all things else are dead.

For only the love that flaunts in red
A shadow of bliss can save,
And here in the night, though life be sped,
Comes back from the cold, dark grave,
By sin's old tyrannous longings led
Comes back from the cold, dark grave—
O'er waves as red as a lover's blood
Struck down in his amorous lustihood!

O evil love in whose tossing hair
The fires of infamous longings glow,
We, too, shall not win sleep from care—
Where heaven's high army hears
The anthems of its spheres,
Nor where majestic Lucifer,
In burning vesture fronts his Foe—
Condemned like them, sans hopes and fears
Sans laughter or the gift of tears,
Monotonously round to go
In endless pleasure's endless woe.

GOLGOTHA



CONFESSION

I KNOW of an odorous palm-forest
Filled with mysterious murmurings,
Where in the glow of the crimson west
A brilliant song-bird sobs and sings.
There is that in the note of the strange bright
bird

Makes heavy the heart within the breast;
And whoso this evil song has heard
Forever forfeits his peace and rest.

But I know too of a wood in the north
With a heavenly perfume all its own,
Where the nightingales long ere dawn pour
forth

A ravishing flood of the purest tone.
The wanderer breathes once more and smiles
As he comes in its soothing shade to sit—
For the air that blows through its cool green
aisles

Is no fierce blast from the stifling pit.

A ripe fruit hangs in the sultry place,
For whose savour a man counts all but loss,
Forgetting even his mother's face
And the bleeding Head upon the cross.
In the cool green moss of the northern wood
There blooms a flower of marvellous hue

That speaks to the soul of naught but good,
And tells of a world where all is new.

A witch-woman dwells in the palm-grove's heat
That is pale as the ghastly face of Death,
But a red robe wraps her from head to feet,
And through red, red lips comes her fevered
breath.

Her kisses burn where they close and cling
Like pain of longing or fire of hell,
And he that thrills with their adder-sting
For them is ready his soul to sell.

In the northern wood stands a slender maid
With eyes that are blue as God's own sky—
Nor is she in scarlet robe arrayed,
But wrapped in her virginal purity.

"I have no part in the fires of sin,"
So runs her song, "for my name is Love!"
Yet he who looks in her eyes shall win
A glimpse of the height of heaven above.

But I have walked where the sorceress dwells,
Where poisoned blooms make the senses reel,
And I have yielded me to her spells,
And lost forever my soul's true weal.
For me no flower of good shall grow
In the ruined garden where hope lies dead—
And I need but look in your eyes to know
The bliss my sin has forfeited!

PROVOCATIO AD MARIAM

O MARY! Mother Mary! have mercy on my
 pain,
And quench the fire of hot desire that flames
 in every vein!

O Mary! Mother Mary! commend me to thy
 Son,
And tell Him that I perish before my course is
 run.

Poor helpless creatures we that walk where
 night and darkness frown,
And so not mine the fault, not mine the might
 that drags me down.

O Mary! Mother Mary! heed thou my sup-
 pliant plea
And say to God the Father a word of grace for
 me.

Before Him lies the mighty book in which with
 iron pen
Are graven deep, while angels weep, the shame-
 ful sins of men.

O Mary! Mother Mary! think of thine own
 sweet Child,

For whom thine eyes shed tears of blood, O
Virgin undefiled.

I too am nailed unto the cross—unto a cross of
ill;
The nails that hold me are the joys for which
I hunger still.

Give me no sop of gall, but pour the wine thy
Son hath blessed,
Wash off the stains of sin, and quench the fire
within my breast!

The incense cloud shall rise for thee, the sacred
tapers burn,
If thou upon my sore distress a favouring eye
wilt turn!

But Mary, Mother Mary, heeds neither prayer
nor vow,
Only my heart's wild beating breaks on the still-
ness now.

O Mary! Mother Mary, hear! the tides of ruin
swell;
My feet are sinking in the sands about the
mouth of hell!

BEFORE THE CROSS

LONG have I struggled with my pain
And sought for peace and rest,
To still the madness in my brain,
The tumult in my breast.
There is no hope unless Thou heed
My abject misery—
Pale God that on the Cross dost bleed
I turn at last to Thee!

I walked where poisonous plants abound;
In search of wisdom high
I stood before the Sphinx—and found
No answer to my cry.
Since truth refused her to my will,
I plucked in petulant wrath,
With reckless hand, the flowers of ill
That grew about my path.

Then sin drew nigh in woman's guise
And wrecked my hopes of peace.
Her body's joy was all my prize,
Her clasp my only ease:
And so to kiss her mouth I yearned
That seemed so soft and fresh—
But knew what thing she was when burned
The brand upon my flesh!

Aye, 'twas a leper I caressed—
 (Beneath the heavy weight
Of guilt, O Lord, I sink oppressed!)
 And I was reprobate!
The good, the pure that I had known,
 They passed me with a frown;
I dared not stand where from the throne
 The Face of God looks down.

Out of the depths of misery
 Thy goodness I entreat;
Like some poor hunted beast I fly
 To cast me at Thy feet.
Roses of blood I bring to Thee,
 A heart that craves for grace—
O Jesus of Gethsemane,
 Turn not from me Thy face!

And though the Sphinx her mystery weird
 Still offers as of yore,
And poisoned flowers their head have reared
 About the senses' door,
No riddle has a stranger sound
 Than this which tells for sooth
That peace in humble faith is found,
 In God alone the truth!

THE GARDEN OF PASSION

SPRING

For Peter Pan

SPRING came carolling through the land,
Roses and laughter on every hand;
But I was gazing with steadfast eye
Where Christ was nailed on high.

Hawthorn blossoms were white and gay,
Promise of fruit in the laden spray—
Only the tree of the Cross bare naught
Save the ruin that death had wrought!

Spring passed on, and a breath of bloom
Swept through the casement, filled the room.
I cried in a sudden agony:
“Lord Jesus, set me free!

“See, I am young, and the blood is hot,
Longing for what I compass not—
Love, and sunshine, and fond delight
In beauty warm and white.

“Lord, Thy Cross is a heavy load,
Thorny and steep the upward road—
Lord, from the woods astir I hear
Laughter and joyous cheer.

“Far be it from me, Lord, to scorn
The bitter anguish that Thou hast borne:
But redder his mouth in its youthful pride
Than the spear-wound in Thy side!

“Ah, see how his hair like soft-spun gold
Falls curling over his raiment's fold,
And his laughing eyes look out with glee
The great wide world to see!

“I thrill at his music silvery sweet,
And I long to follow his dancing feet:
For lo! where they fall the flowers are born—
And hearts no more forlorn!

“My soul goes out to him since the hour
He passed me by in his winsome power,
And my blood is stirred by his witchery—
Prince Jesus, set me free!”

Bowed to my prayer the wounded Head,
Died in the west the sunset red—
And a slow, slow drop of blood ran down
From under the thorny crown.

Strange, in the years that have gone, the Cross
Had grown so dear to me that its loss
Went to my heart with a thrill of pain—
I had half turned back again!

O sweet Lord Spring, I am free at last
To follow wherever thy feet have passed,
Over the dales and over the rills
To the gladsome Grecian hills!

A SPRING BLESSING

SPRING'S blessing be upon you, dear!

Such is the prayer most meet for one
Whose eyes look up so starry-clear—

With all his flowerets new-begun
Still may he bless your pathway, dear,
Who weaves his golden threads around
Your heart and mine together bound:

Because your eyes are starry-clear—
Spring's blessing be upon you, dear!

Spring's blessing be upon you, child,

When all the earth with longing swells,
And lilies ring their silver bells

For joy that he is nigh,

And open wide, their lord to greet,
Adoring humbly at his feet

(Ah, spring has come, and spring is
sweet!)

Their inmost pageantry,

And all the earth with love is wild—
Spring's blessing be upon you, child!

Spring's blessing be upon you, child,
And may the song of nightingales
Re-echo from the wooded dales—
Like women's arms so soft and mild,
And as deep crimson roses wild,
'(Such is the song of the nightingales,
And sad as tears of one that wails
Where love's high temple is defiled);
Spring's blessing be upon you, child!

Spring's blessing be upon your ways,
Before in life's distracting maze
We fall on hopeless evil days!
True, summer comes more richly warm
And fraught with wilder passion's storm
Of torturing blisses;
But golden gleams spring's youthful form,
More sweet his kisses;
Soft breezes sing their roundelays—
Spring's blessing be upon your ways!

Spring's blessing be upon you, dear!
His hair is decked with flowery cheer;
 Upon his brow the diadem
 Shines out by right of youth immortal;
His might brings glad release to them
 That were condemned without the portal
Of hope to live in sickening fear;
Spring's blessing be upon you, dear!

Spring's blessing be upon you, child!
And never may the wine-cup hold
 One drop of bitter questioning.
May Death in spring-time find you, child—
 But Love shall toss his locks of gold
 And make all life an endless spring,
And fate and he be reconciled:
Spring's blessing be upon you, child!

LOVE'S SILENCE

ON crimson wings of passionate desire
I traversed gardens of a tropic clime
To pluck love's strangest blossoms, and my lyre
Tuning, I caught each heart-throb in a rhyme.

But now thy lashes burn me, and my head
Is all confused with bitter love of thee;
Yet never have I sung thy praise, or said
How very pleasant was thy love to me.

I hush the songs that rise in me by day,
That rise by day and in the depth of night,
Lest—as a tiny bird that flies away
By some child's laughter taken with affright—

At sound of lute-strings stirring in the wind,
Love, half afraid, unfold his pinions fleet,
And only leave upon the lawn behind
The perfumed imprint of his sandalled feet.

REDEEMED

SLOW failed the twilight in my room,
That none might witness my dismay,
But, wide awake amidst the gloom,
I dreamed beyond the close of day.

There was a tumult in my soul,
And yet I knew not what I sought:
Toward a strange and hidden goal
I groped with fingers fever-fraught.

Then reared the ancient foe of good
His serpent's crest: I strove no more,
But rose and went until I stood
Where sin set wide its open door.

The air is thick as incense-wreaths
That waver in the candles' gleam.
But what is this that softly breathes
Upon my brow as in a dream?

A fairy vision of surprise
Toward my couch you seemed to glide:
There was no need to raise my eyes
To know that you were by my side.

And when your slender fingers strayed
In pity o'er my burning face,
The foul enchantment was afraid
And fled defeated from the place.

And when your mouth so soft and red
Clung to me, soothing where it fell,
With one light touch my pain was sped,
I was redeemed from depths of hell!

Then drooped above me—and dismay
Beside the gate no longer stood—
White blossoms from a laden spray,
The wonder of your womanhood!

LOVE TRIUMPHANT.

YOUR body's treasures are mine to-day,
Though bitter as gall be their savour still;
From head to foot shall my kisses play,
Till naught is kept from their sovereign will!

The voice of my need supreme must guide
My passionate love to its destined goal;
My feverish fingers shall seek and glide
Until at the last I hold the soul.

My hot strong hands will no veil endure
That shadows your radiant nakedness;
Lay bare each beauty, conceal no lure,
Leave naught to hinder my fond caress!

Young blood beats onward, unchecked by shame,
When passion's harvest is ripe to reap;
For who shall speak with the raging flame,
Or stay the cataract in its leap?

My armies have stormed at your city's gate—
I have conquered you, hold you. Might is
right
With the beasts of the wild that celebrate
In the jungle their primal marriage night.

You too are moved by the selfsame power,
Your quick breath tells in its shuddering fall:
There is naught so strong as love this hour—
Call it god or beast, it is lord of all!

The god in me and the beast in me
And all deep things come up to light;
And I would barter my soul to be
The prize of love for a single night.

One long, long night of supreme desire,
One long, long night of riot and rage;
For you are the sea and I the fire,
And old as the world is the war we wage.

The old, old strife of woman and man
That ever has been, and still shall be
Until the day when the vaulted span
Shall sink a wreck in the whelming sea.

Once fed, no longer the wolf-pack raves:
But love can never of madness tire,
And I must drown in your passion's waves,
And you consume in my hot desire.

This the law of the flowering south,
Of the snow-clad north where the world is
white . . .

You shall faint and fall as I crush your mouth
Beneath a conqueror's ruthless might!

My life is poured in the stream of yours,
But fire and flood were not meant to mate:
We shall never be one while the world
endures—

And the meaning of love at the last is hate!

My soul is drunk with your maddening charms;
You have taken all—I have naught to lose.
About me tighten your slender arms
With the very grip of the hangman's noose.

So let us struggle, both flame and flood,
Let love and hate and sense have play
Till the slow dawn rises bathed in blood,
And you and I are dead ere day!

SUNSET.

WITH amber light the sinking day
Has tinged the stream below the town,
Before the pageant fades away,
And night's black wings come swooping
down.

The wind has heaped the clouds from far
And rounded them like maiden's breasts.
And out beyond the harbour bar
A violet shadow softly rests.

Thus drifting down the stream, I caught
Far-blown a murmurous refrain,
(You know it well, dear!), and I thought
With kindness of the past again.
So may your memories, too, be fraught
With no regret, or hate, or pain,
May all the bitterness be naught,
And all the sweet of love remain.

THE SCARLET FLOWER

IT was in the days, in the days of the roses,
When under your kisses my sorrow was sped,
Now autumn blossoms the field encloses,
And autumn blossoms enwreath our head—
And Love and rejoicing and May are dead,
And the world is windy and waste and wide:
The days of the roses have long since fled,
And the scarlet flower of love has died.

Once thought I your lips with unperishing kisses
To kiss, that as mantles of queens are red,
Once thought I no love in the world as this is,
O beautiful love, O dream that is dead—
But the wind's in the tree tops, the leaves are
all shed,
They are borne down the terrible mountain side;
All sweet things flee as our summer has fled,
And the scarlet flower of love has died.

We two of the honey of love have eaten,
Have drunk deep draughts of the gold
sunshine,
But the key of the grove we were wont to meet
in,
Where bloomed that flower as red as wine,
Is lost in some mystical land divine—
No refuge our love has, no place to abide:
In our grove dwells the autumn, 'mid wood-
land and vine—
And the scarlet flower of love has died.

L'envoi

Nor fairy nor elf-queen can alter our fate,
The magical word is forever denied;
The past is dead, and the charm too late,
And the scarlet flower of love has died.

MR. W. H.

“To Mr. W. H., the onlie begetter of these ensuing sonnets.”

—Inscription to Shakespeare's SONNETS.

I SOMETIMES dream and dreaming long
For thee, strange boy whose golden head
With blossoms of unending song
Was garlanded.

Sad, surely, and contemptuous
And smiling thou beheld'st the game
Of life, as once Antinous
His splendid shame.

A softer light was in thine eyes
Than any that the moonbeam paints,
Or in some dead queen's hair that lies
Or blessed saint's.

And yet, perchance thou hadst no art,
Nor depth, nor subtlety,—a boy
To whom a poet's singing heart
Was but a toy.

FOR ANTINOUS IN HIS OLD AGE

SNOW'S in thy hair and wrinkles on thy brow,
The years have strewn the ashes on thy face;
Of all things wretched, wanting most in
 grace,
Of all things sad, the saddest thing art thou.
Now has thy boyish smile become a leer,
Thy lips are swollen and thy vision blinks,
And in thy heart, more ancient than the
 Sphinx,
Abide alone the memory and the tear.

O lovely lad reborn in many a land,
Of Shakespeare loved and Michelangelo!
Not thine this age's crown of sorrow, and
Thou shouldst have died these many years
 ago,
Not grown into a spectre of the past,
To be a thing of horror at the last.

TO SLEEP

O GENTLE sleep, turn not thine eyes away,
But place thy finger on my brow and take
All burthens from me and all dreams that
ache;

Upon mine eyes a cooling balsam lay,
Seeing I am aweary of the day.

But now thy lips are ashen and they quake—
What spectral vision seest thou that can
shake

Thy sweet composure and thy heart dismay?

Perhaps the eyes of wicked murder gleam
Upon my bedside, or some monstrous dream
Would bring such fearsome guilt upon the
head

Of my unvigilant soul as might arouse
The Borgian snake from her envenomed bed,
And startle Nero in his Golden House!

PRAYER OF SOULS IN NEED

LORD of good pilots, kindly Father, hear us
And teach our feet to walk Thy ways of pain;
Lo, once again the awful head of Eros
Rises from seas of passion, and again

The hand to which love's unblessed power is
given
Raising, he hurls a life against the shoal,
And smiling marks adrift 'twixt Hell and
Heaven
The shipwreck of a soul!

RESURRECTION

AWAY, away, ghost of my dead desire,
Stir not again the ashes in my breast,
Of all my loves I had made one great fire,
And burned thine image even as the rest!

Now from his grave Love casts the covering,
And once again there rises through the night,
Like sudden water from a perished spring,
The murdered music of my slain delight!

THE BALLAD OF NUN AND KNIGHT

She speaks:

I DREAMED a dream of how the red sun fell,
And on the plain beyond the city spread
A joyous crowd, by Love and Laughter led;
When sudden came, but faintly audible,
A leper's voice, and then the warning bell:
Then passion paled—seized with a speechless
dread,
They tarried not to spit at him, but fled,
As if that beggar were a thing from hell.

And so if once our love were known, O sweet!
The veriest harlot, roaming through the street,
Would rather make the gutter her abode,
And share the leper's bed without a sigh,
Than touch our hand, but praying thank her
God
That she is not even as thou and I.

He speaks:

Full well I know that with its craggy rim
The cup of wrath awaits us and the Doom,
O Bride of Christ, thou for the love of whom
To all hell's torches these mine eyes were dim:
Is He not Lord of all the Seraphim?

His all the gardens and all fruit the womb
Of earth shall bear?—I took one little bloom.
Faithful to me, thou brokest faith with Him.

Yet though all saints turn from us, and hell's gin
Close fast upon us, and the red flames dwell
On your gold hair, and where your mouth has
been,

Lovers shall know and sing of us, and tell
How that our love was greater than our sin,
And tears of pity reach the heart of hell.

LOVE IN DREAMLAND

WHITE cloud-wonders waver and wander,
White mists rising and falling yonder
Are like chill fingers laid upon my heart;
Ever the nightingale's plaint grows fonder—
Can it be true that you and I must part?

Red, red roses hang in a cluster,
Red lips glow in the wine-cup's lustre;
Stay me, before I go, with wine and bread!
Round me an army of shadows muster
And weave a veil of darkness for my head.

Will o' the wisp before me flying,
Pale sad faces like faint flames dying—
I walk alone beside a spectral mere;
Ghostly voices about me crying
Fill every crevice of my soul with fear!

Lights of error and mists of terror,
On I go by the paths of error;
Far bells ring out in solemn warning tone.
I look in the moonlight's magic mirror,
And doubt the world's existence and my own.

Voice of the sea in its anguished groaning,
Old woods that never can cease from moan-
ing,
The song that rings and sings o'er hill and dale,
False enchantments are all intoning—
I am a dream and you its shadow pale.

White cloud-wonders are soaring and sweep-
ing—
Far away you are waiting, sleeping.
No passing madness now my vision mars:
Our love is safe in the fairies' keeping,
Our kingdom set in worlds beyond the stars!

FRIENDSHIP

Lo, in my hour of need I called on thee,
Asking thy friendship's none too heavy toll;
Comrades were we when I was glad and
whole,
And yet thou cam'st not, and at last I see
Twain are the ways of friendship, and there be
One that laughs with us o'er the fragrant
bowl,
And one that wanders with the troubled soul
In the great silence of Gethsemane.

I can forgive, and while glad days abound
Thou shalt be with me; but when Autumn
flings
The rose-leaf and the wine-cup to the ground,
Then would I call upon the heart that
hears
With intimate love the depth of human
things,
The eye that knows the sanctity of tears.

WASTED SONGS

FOR your dear sake I worked my own soul
wrong,

Yea, gave you all my splendid roses, wet
With dew of my heart's blood, O sweet, and
set,

Upon your brow a diadem of song.

These boons you blandly took—as though they
were

A thing as fleeting as the thin sea-foam,
Or any gift of fruit or honey-comb—
With the light smile of those who do not
care . . .

LORD EROS

WHAT man is strong to bind and hold
The eagle in his proud estate,
Or from Love's treacherous fairy-gold
To weave his woof of fate?

Lord Eros is no gentle god,
Nor human folly smiles upon,
His are the scourges and the rod
Without oblivion.

We deemed him but a winsome boy,
Until he clutched us by the throat;
We dallied with him, and the toy
Became a sword that smote.

The Book of Love is closed and sealed
With iron signet, and the night
Has smothered with her agate shield
The torches of delight.

AT CROSS-ROADS

Frater, ave atque vale.—Catullus.

ONE singing road we travelled both together,
All day long side by side;
Now that the night is falling on the heather,
Our ways divide.

If thou choose one path, I shall choose the
other—

The whither, who can tell?

But ere we part I call to thee: My brother,
Hail and farewell!

AUTUMN

YOUTH's first flush has left you; yet 'tis sweet to
rest

Close against your beating heart—never maid-
en's breast

Made a softer pillow for my aching brow,
Never swifter coursed the blood through my
veins than now!

Like an elder sister's, calm and mild your gaze,
Finding gentle pardon for a boy's impetuous
ways.

"Child!" you call me, chide my freedom with a
smile

Yet I hear your heart-beats, know you love me
all the while!

Fate has used me kindly, granted to my prayer
Deeper in life's eyes to look than boyhood else
may dare—

Unafraid to face its current sweeping strong:
Gods and women with their love reward the
poet's song.

Calm autumnal beauty, still I wish you well,
Still I pray no breath of harm may touch you
with its spell.

'Twas in you that first I knew how morn and
eve could meet,
Death's majestic sadness, life's transport wildly
sweet!

LOVE CRUEL

RIGHT true it is that once love's bacchanal
Had spent itself, and the devouring sea
Of passion slept, that unrelentingly
I heaped upon you bitterness, and all
That sears the heart and kills it, yea the gall
Poured down your throat, until you looked at
me
With sad wan smile that was a silent plea,
Craving deliverance from the cruel thrall.

Right true it is I harass you with fears,
With sudden mood, indifference, sharp
surprise:
I love you best, O sweetest, when the tears
Moisten the perfect crystal of your eyes,
And from their depths, as from mysterious
meres,
The blinding mists of utter anguish rise.

SILENTIUM POETÆ

HERE in the dusk your lips against my face
Cling close and sigh—you tremble in my
arms,
Make glad my heart with indescribable
charms,
And all my manhood hungers for your grace.
Yet I recall how friendship's light embrace
Awoke in me the soul divine that sings;
The lyre that when Apollo touched the
strings
Found voice, but faintly Venus' hand obeys.

What time I trod the path Catullus went,
Where Shakespeare paced, before but still in
view,
My every heart-beat was a burst of song:
But now a woman's tresses redolent
Entwine about my fingers, and a new
Strange dumbness does my sacred calling
wrong!

THE LAST CHORD

WEARILY I leaned my head
 Against your shoulder; not a word
 Was heard
Or said.

As fragile fingers clutching anxiously
 Call forth no answer from the silent urn,
So from the valley of deep mystery
 No dead love shall return.

We were right glad at last to part,
 And very wise—
But, when with sudden start
 You felt in me the tears of pity rise,
 A gleam of hate came to your eyes,
And there was murder in your heart!

A LEAVE-TAKING

THE heavy gang-chains clatter, and the boat
Groans grievously like to some stricken knight,
A sudden yearning rises in my throat,
And unshed tears half veil you from my sight.

Your love was like an incense-bearing vase
That I have shattered, playing carelessly,
Seeing that dearer than my Lady's grace
The lay of sainted poets was to me.

As we have loved, so let us part from love,
And I shall walk into the outer night
Singing, at heart the sweet remembrance of
Those violet-scented hours of delight.

SOUTHERN SUMMER

UNRESTFUL rest and aching drowsiness,
Never a leaf to stir in tree or grass,
The sands of time pass slower through the
glass,
And in its brilliant, many-colored dress
The valley lies, all dumb and motionless,
As if the angel of the Lord did pass
Leaving behind no trace of life. Alas,
This is a summer of great weariness!

For I must wither in this tropic fire,
These sickly fruits and blossoms I must dread,
And on my heart has seized a great desire
For the swift winds that lash my Northern
home,
Where brave men are of fair-haired women
bred,
Where heroes love and where the Vikings
roam.

LOVE'S QUEST

I HAVE sought Love, and sought him every-
where;

Once in a wood I saw his gleaming hair

Flash from afar, but drawing nearer found

A startled satyr leaping from his lair.

IN THE AGORA

TO A DEFEATED CANDIDATE

SURELY we stumble toward an evil day,
For us of late is freedom's path too steep,
Her words perverted in our mouths; we keep
Our bondage willing, aye, endure the sway
Of trickster's hands and redder hands that slay:
Yet this no season to lament or weep,
But to arise and with tempestuous sweep
Hurl the false idols from their seat of clay.

Thou whom the people's voice acclaim their
own,
Thou their defender, shalt approach the throne
Of the blind goddess with the awful rod,
And she will know thee victor without flaw,
Or else set Guile above the shrine of God,
And break in twain the tablets of the Law.

HEINE IN NEW YORK

(Professor Herter's Heine Fountain, received by the City of New York, after it had been refused by well-nigh every important German community, has twice been injured; once by malice, and once through accident. Finally it was proposed to remove it from its present site to make room for a useless street.)

NOR life nor death had any peace for thee,
 Seeing thy mother cast thee forth, a prey
 To wind and water, till we bade thee stay
 And rest, a pilgrim weary of the sea.
 But now it seems that on thine effigy
 Thy very host an impious hand would lay:
 Go then and wander, praising on thy way
 The proud Republic's hospitality!

Yet oft with us wreathed brow must suffer
 wrong,
 The sad Enchanter of the land of Weir
 Is still uncrowned, unreverenced, and we fear
 The Lords of Gold above the Lords of Song.
 Were it not strange, then, should we honour
 more
 The sweet-mouthed singer of a foreign shore?

THE NEW COLOSSUS IN 1907

BEHOLD the myriads at the gate
Who from the Old World saw thy light,
Thy hand is strong to bless or smite
These pilgrims, and thy "yea" is fate.

They as our fathers come from far;
From shores where blazes Dante's sun,
And from the bleak dominion
Where fall the lashes of the Czar.

Their strong untiring arms have hewn
A path o'er Alpine mountain-crest,
Them England nurtured at her breast,
And over them rose Erin's moon.

Yet though their necks for menial toil
Are bent to build our empire, they
Shall bear within no distant day
Strong sons and daughters of this soil.

But now we need their labour; mute
Our engines lie in barren rest,
And in our gardens south and west
Ungarnered rots the mellow fruit

And the white cotton. We are shorn
Of many gifts of priceless worth;
The yellow gold cries from the earth
And from our fields the yellow corn.

They shall reap wealth from ore and coal
Such as no Eastern king beheld,
And build the iron roads that weld
Our nation in one splendid whole.

Not only bent on distant quest
In tropic skies, thou shalt at length
Bethink thee of thy native strength,
Young Titan of the boundless West!

Within the compass God has set,
Between these shores from main to main,
Thou hast new victories to gain,
And thou hast worlds to conquer yet!

MALE AND FEMALE CREATED
HE THEM

AIOGYNE

WE are alone—are quite alone
 Beneath the heavy canopy,
Only the crimson light, far-thrown
 From the dim lamp gleams fitfully.
Now passion's rites have all been paid;
 Lean back in silence, gently, thus,
Until my dreaming eyes have strayed
 Above your beauty luminous.

The sinuous glory of your hair,
 The chiselled marble of your breast,
And, but for soft-showered rose-leaves bare,
 Each secret nook where love may rest.
I gaze in silence: you have stilled
 The hunger of my soul's disease,
Your body is with wonders filled,
 And you creation's masterpiece.

O mystery, O miracle,
 Shall I extol your love or rue?
For you are heaven, and you are hell,
 And God and beast are both in you.
You stood beside the Cross of shame
 When wavering manhood failed and fled—
And yet I know you for the same
 That tempted Satan to her bed!

So short your memory, Magdalene?

Think you no longer of the day
His word went through you like the keen
Sharp sword of judgment, and you lay
Before His feet with unbound hair
Who cleansed you of your leprosy,
And made a woman's womb to bear
The Godhead's awful majesty?

But ah! the fever in your breast

Craved not alone such holy grace;
Sin was your raiment, and your quest
Was evil, and your purpose base.
Your kisses taught our primal sire
The meaning and the might of lust,
O Lilith, half enchantress dire,
Half monster coiling in the dust.

Vultures that wheel where carrion lies,
All vices followed in your train,
As vermin round the God of Flies;
Of fruit proscribed your lips were fain.
Strange fires of lust would leap and war
Beneath your bosom's ivory.
The white bull trembled when from far
He heard your step, Pasiphae!

In Mitylene's mountain glades
You breathed soft music on the pale
Breast-blossoms of your Lesbian maids,
O sweet-mouthed Sappho, and the bale
Of barren passion held you thrall,
And in far Syria turned your heart
To brown-limbed lads upon the wall
Imprisoned by the painter's art.

And grisly tales the Nile could tell
Of boys that dreamed a maddening dream,
And how a lifeless body fell
Each night into the silent stream.
To-day, amid the sullen sands
Where once was Isis' temple vast,
The Sphinx your dreadful image stands,
Eternal symbol of your past!

When Rome's imperial crown adorned
Your head, still sin was law to you:
No meanest slave's embrace you scorned,
The very streets your orgies knew.
Practiced in every wanton wile,
Your heart a lazar-house impure,
You made the name Faustina vile—
The serpent was your paramour!

With mystic dye your tresses stained,
 You watched to death the Baptist pass,
And with your boon damnation gained,
 O daughter of Herodias!
And when the road to Calvary
 For you the Incarnate Saviour trod,
You grieved not that He went to die
 But spat upon the face of God!

Long years have passed, the softly-curved
 Sweet lips have kissed full many a lord;
But Sin, the master you have served,
 Grants endless youth for your reward.
Eternal Woman! Good nor ill
 Has left its stamp on charms like these:
Your body is a wonder still,
 And you creation's masterpiece!

Away with visions that recall
 Your nameless lust, your stranger woes,
For whiter than the first snowfall
 Your immemorial beauty glows.
Lean back in all your loveliness
 Soft-bedded where red roses bleed:
A fool who would your secret guess,
 And who has guessed it—poor indeed!

AIANDER

THE proud free glance, the thinker's mighty
brow,
The curling locks and supple, slender limbs,
The eye that speaks dominion, victor's smile—
All these I know. By them I hail thee Man,
Lord of the earth. Thou art the woman's slave,
And yet her master . . .

I know thee when about thy sunburnt thighs
Thou swing'st the tawny skin a tiger wore
Till thy rude weapon dashed him to the ground.
I know thee also when thy shoulders bear
The purple mantle of an emperor,
Stained with the blood of thousand tiny lives;
The golden sandals clasped upon thy feet;
Thy hair made rich with spikenard, and thy
brow
Graced with the gifts that mutual east and west
Conspire to offer to their sovereign lord.

I know thee too in lust's relentless rage,
Dragging the chosen woman to thy lair,
To frame upon her body at thy will
Sons in thine image, strong of loin as thou:
And when, the bearer of thy father's sins,
Within the portals of the House of Shame

Monstrous delight thy passion seeks to find
 In futile quest, and Nature pitiful
 Will not transmit unto the future's womb
 Thy weakened generation . . .

Image of God I know thee—God thyself.
 Walking the world on India's sun-parched plains
 Thy name was Rama; thou in desert sands
 Of Araby didst dream thy wondrous dream;
 The cradles of all races thou hast seen—
 Thou Zarathustra—thou the Son of Man!
 I know the wounds of hands and feet and
 side . . .

Ah, and I know the ring about thy neck
 Of ruddy curls! Say, Judas, in thine ear
 Make they sweet music still, the silver coins,
 As on the day the temple's veil was rent?

So, in the far-stretched background of all time
 I watch thy progress through the sounding
 years—

Wielding the sceptre here, and there the lyre,
 The lord or servant of thy master-passion,
 Pure or polluted, fool or nobly wise.
 And this it is that justifies the whole,
 This is thy greatness: thou hast stumbled oft,
 And straying often fallen. Yet all the while,
 Wandering the stony wilderness of life,

Thine eyes were fixed upon the steadfast star
That far-off stands above the Promised Land.

Rough is the road, beset by mocking heavens
And false illusory hells—the strong, the weak
Alike by dancing fires are led astray,
And poisoned flowers bloom rankly on the path.
Self in the guise of selfishness approached,
Frailty in garment of a god benign;
Pleasure with lying accents “I am sin”
Proclaimed, and vice, “I am bold action” cried;
“I am contentment,” spoke the belly full,
And the applause of groundlings, “I am fame.”

And so it came that only here and there
In all the years a strong, unerring one
Plucked boldly at the flowers of brief delight,
Yet by the dust of tumult unconfused
Pressed on to reach the goal; the strong man's
 goal:
To rule and to enjoy, to hold command
Over both things and spirits, to enjoy
All pleasant sounds and all sweet gifts, yet strive
Untiring, ever upward to that sun
Which no world-master's blind despotic will,
But his own hand, with more than Titan
 strength,
Unto the utmost firmament has flung.



THE MAGIC CITY

A POET'S CREED

“ASSUAGE the tempests in thy heart that toss,
For now thy verse has a rebellious ring;
Unto the people as a gift to bring
Transmute thy gold into the common dross!”
Nay, all who sang and singing bare the cross,
Villon and Byron heard the selfsame thing;
Yet had they heeded, had they ceased to sing,
Were not the earth the poorer for their loss?

Stand back in silence, as with trembling awe
Upon the masters of high song I call:
What though my heart be stained with many a
flaw,
What though my blind steps stumble, and I
fall:
There is no god save Beauty, and no law
Save that of Numbers richly musical.

TO SWINBURNE.

ELOQUENT master, thy melodious rage
Our latter song may not aspire to reach!
Our eyes beheld the magic of thy speech
Conjure the love-queens of a perished age,
Yea, clothe with life their spectral forms, and
 wage,
When the sight stung thee, war with Heaven
 for each:
Only the rolling anthem of the beach
Could break the spell and end thy vassalage.

The sea, thy true love, taught thy lyric tongue
The mighty music of her mutiny:
Thy voice as hers the ages shall prolong,
And, praising numbers, men shall ask of
 thee:
"Is it the sea that thunders in his song,
Or is it his song reverberates in the sea?"

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

LIKE a heart stabbed through with the sword
of woe,

The sun suffuses the sky with blood
And bathes the land in a crimson glow,
With the colour of sin in a rushing flood.
I gaze on a pale, pale face afar
Agleam in the light of the dying day,
But whiter and colder than snow-wreaths are
That the clouds on the Alpine fir-trees lay.

And a mouth as red as the wine that flows
Where a monarch feasts with his warriors
brave—

So glowing a red had never the rose
With its roots set deep in a murderer's grave,
Whose impious hand was raised to kill
The mother that bore him, and then knew
how
He must live his life 'neath the curse of ill,
With the brand of Cain on his burning brow.

And floating, fluttering round it fell
Long locks like a regal robe of state,
And ever enmeshed in their magic spell
Great captive Titans humbly wait.

And eyes so deep that they seem to know
All depths yet reached since the world
began—

Aye, deep as the bottomless pit they go,
Or the wayward, wandering heart of man.

I heard a song, and I had no choice
But to listen as into my heart it stole . . .
Strange loves that speak with a siren voice,
And lusts that rot both body and soul.
Ah, never again since it entered in
Have I known the peace of a moment's rest—
For there is a note in this song of sin
That wakes an echo within my breast.

You have travelled far into love's demesne;
You have pierced to the heart of the riddle of
things:

Your soul is an altar on which unseen
Burns the mystic flame that has scorched my
wings.

You that sing of sin as but she has sung
That lived before passion was bound by fear,
In the Grecian land when the lyre was young,
Brother and master, I hail you here!

THE POET

ALBEIT my song is like a driven blade
And I am first, in all your minstrel wars,
I cannot break the elemental bars:
When stood the sun still while I sang, or stayed
His chariot in a cloud to give me shade?
Nor shall my passion swerve the calendars
Or melt the cold indifference of the stars
Before whose light the Muse's lamp must fade.

What though my strain stir all hearts and sur-
pass
Great Dante's music drawn from blood and
tears?
All I have wrought and praying wrought
so well,
Is in the iron chorus of the spheres
No more than beating of a sounding brass,
Or empty tinkle of a jester's bell.

CONSOLATION

TO RICHARD WATSON GILDER.

THE sun-god in his robe of gold
That trails the argent clouds upon,
One day shall be a story told,
And hidden in oblivion.

The thunder of his chariot
Seems but as playing on a lute
To the Most High, who careth not
If all the starry mouths be mute.

Yea, when the cosmic cycles ring
No more around the Central Throne,
Shall not the Void beyond Him sing
His praise in monstrous monotone?

The earth and her constellate peers
Are fleeting as an evening chime,
And the irrevocable years
Roll down the cataract of time.

Yet are we not all dust; the night,
By Love's own breath made exquisite,
Shall for a space in passion's might
Conjoin us with the Infinite.

And though the planets falling reel
We shall escape the primal curse,
And in immortal numbers feel
The heart-beat of the Universe.

HADRIAN

How pale, how wan, my Cæsar, is thy smile,
Grey with the ashes of the heart's desire.
Shall not thy slave with sweet pleasaunce
beguile
The hosts of care that to thy hurt conspire?

Shall shimmering silks before thy throne be
spread
From the far sands where patient camels
plod?
Or black-robed seers draw nigh, who long
have read
The secret lines that cross the face of God?

Shall steaming blood thine anguish drive away,
When in the arena's madness and its din
Huge bright-eyed tigers crouch upon the
prey,
Or groan beneath the poisoned javelin?

Nay, wilt thou scourge the arrogant sea with
chains,
And make thy footstool of an ocean's
might?
Lo, at thy nod the storm-tossed ship regains
The friendly shore, or sinks from human
sight.

Wilt thou, perfumed and burning as the fire,
The grape's red blood from jewelled
chalice drain?

Till drunken gladness to the gods aspire,
Shall vine-wreathed Bacchus revel with his
train?

Far kingdoms send unto thy regal seat
The fairest maids with lucent step and
glance,

That at thy bidding shall with naked feet
Swing in the maze of bacchanalian dance!

Or, shall the slave-boy from the Lydian land
With sound of lute-string charm thine ear,
and thou

The minstrel raising, feel a lily hand
Soft as the snow upon thine aching brow?

But the pale Cæsar sadly smiled and drear,
"Enough," he said, and yet again:

"Enough,

The purple fades, the laurel soon grows
sere,

Death lays his finger on the lips of love.

"Thy words, O slave, ring hollow as the tomb;
Like evil damps, thine incense too shall
pass,

One thing alone escapes the general doom:
Love's haloed image in art's magic glass!

“Wounds past all cure are burning in my breast,
Beauty’s last kiss on lips that perish thus,
Bring, that at last my weary heart find
rest,
The marble statue of Antinous.

“I care not now for any earthly toy,
Life’s zenith lies behind me many a
mile . . .
White lotus-blossoms bury all my joy,
And all my realm and all my self the Nile.

“His face was heavenly transport to mine eyes,
Sweet was his breath, as scented winds that
blow
O’er fields of purple hyacinths and rise
In the glad May-time from the floral snow.

“Approach in silence; holy is the ground
Where beauty’s feet have trod the desolate
earth.
Bow to the slave that freed my soul, and
bound
My love with loving to his greater worth.

“Throughout all time shall sound his far lauda-
tions,
From sea to land and on from land to sea,
I, even I, imperial lord of nations,
Before this shrine in worship bend the knee.

“Antinous, thy beauty is not dead—

Thou liv’st in realms of marble and of
song!”

And wearily the pallid Cæsar’s head
Sank on his breast. Then silence deep and
long.

But where to Beauty sacrifice is given

We too shall kneel to worship and adore,
Whether its star resplendent rose in heaven
From Grecian hill or Galilean shore.

ART

ALL-EMBRACING

Eternal art,

That of the dust a handful takest,

And by thy touch a spirit makest,

In reverent praising

Of thy perfection I would bear my part;

Thou alone art beauty, thou life's inmost
heart!

Thou hast redeemed me,

Thou set me free,

Broken the lifeless matter's prisoning shell,

Let my soul forth

To seek what beseemed me

And in the splendour of God's face to
dwell.

For Nature works with other powers,

Draws from predestined seed the flowers,

And all things from their substance due;

But thou, the source of endless light,

Dost out of nothing by thy might

Create a world where all is new.

While Nature's careful tutelage
Confines us in a narrow cage—

 The single life is but a drop of rain
 That falls in summer showers
 In ceaseless round to be absorbed again
 Into the vast inane,
 An insignificant atom, that the gale
 Scatters its blast before,—
 Art gives us mighty wings to soar,
 With eagle sweep the infinite heights to
 scale,

Storm at the gates

 Of heaven's high fortress barred,
Though time and space and all the fates
 Stood vainly on their guard.
 Its gift is freedom—space to move,
 Our latent powers to prove,
 Towards an imperishable goal to strive,
 Self-conscious and alive!

Looking backward through the misty ages
 Over the record of man's changeful way,
Sudden I behold upon the pages
 Of the ancient book a gleam of day.
 Amid the broadening light
 A new creation springs to sight.
 Behold! the mists of chaos clear,
 And art is here!

Confusion yields to order; beauty's curves,
Fixed fast in marble, art preserves.

Night no longer glooms upon the way,
Colours gleam and flash where dawns the day;
Already from the lyre uncouth
Speak faltering accents of eternal truth.

Upon the scene a sightless minstrel stands
Who Iliad sings:

From Hellas and the Latian lands

The resonant echo rings.

Higher still and higher

Mounts the sacred fire,

And welling from her tuneful throat

Hear Sappho's fond complaining note

Far o'er the Lesbian waters float;

Blessing with love or blasting in his ire,

Catullus grasps the lyre!

Nor poesy alone

Delights us with its mystic tone.

For lo! from out the deep arise

The pillared glories of the Parthenon:

The sculptor's eyes

Unsealed behold, his hands devise,

Types of undying beauty, and in stone

Hold the white vision of the boy

Whose lustrous beauty was an emperor's
joy.

Thus onward still
I trace the proud creative will;
I see the heaven-inspired throng
Press further in its purpose strong,
Watch Raphael ply his brush, and know
The mind of Michelangelo!
Flung out by art's divinest discontent,
New stars adorn the firmament,
Great Shakespeare's glory burns,
And Goethe in his orbit turns
Above the deep horizon line
Where Wagner's rising light will
shine.

A down the stream my fancy sweeps,
Where stately temples crown the steeps.
I sail through purple seas
With strange illumined argosies;
Flames of kindling supernal,
Flowers of beauty eternal
Burst on the eye;
And dimly in a vista I descry
Pale, ghostlike souls of men that stray
Through some mysterious dream-
land's avenues
And know not whether life or
death to choose.

Half seen through veils of shifting smoke
Delicate fairy forms
And phantoms come in hovering swarms;
Shapes that never were on earth
And never shall have mortal birth
Art's magic spells evoke!

No longer blinded by its majesty
We gaze upon the sunrise in the sea—
No more poor helpless drops of rain,
Or atoms that the summer gales
Drive scurrying on amain:
Now have we strength that avails
To mount where the planets wheel,
Trampling beneath our feet
The clouds of air, to feel,
Free from the bounds that ag-
grieved,
The world-heart's rhythmic beat—
And all this deliverance
Art has achieved.

THE MAGIC CITY

WHO knows where Babylon's forgotten kings
Now keep their state?
Laid to their rest 'neath purple coverings,
They meet the common fate.

No traces that abide
Of all the Christs who bled upon the Cross
Ere Jesus died,
And by the Ganges sought the gain of loss:
Behold their priestly mantle's dye
Has faded, and their day gone by.

The witching girls with eyes so crystal-clear
And honeyed tresses bright,
Full many a fool's delight
And his heart's all;
These with the snows of yester-year
Not Villon's cry shall wake to light,
Asleep beyond recall.

The tables of the law are broken;

The flocks are feeding on the grass that grows
About each sculptured token

Of ancient empire, and the wild wind blows,

Yet, though the spell of death and ruin lord
The earth, above all mortal woes

Deathless, triumphant sounds the poet's
word,

Clothed with thought's flame, and
through the storm-fraught night.

Blazes like a mighty sword

Leaping to the fight.

Through the clang of battle, and the crash

Of worlds that to destruction fall,

Song rings out like silver trumpets' call,

Or, heard though all,

Harmonious still, great chords consenting clash.

Never is melody silent on earth;

Faint, far-away, but forever rings the sound of
its mirth,

Not even the sun is eternal, but immortal, O

Homer, thy birth!

And still the listening years

Repeat her lyric name,

Who wove song's deathless garland from her
tears

And from her shame.

And raised by music's might
—High walls in battlemented line—
A magic city dawns before my sight:
Golden temples rear their haughty heads
on high
Domes like new suns blazing seem to span
the sky.

I enter in, and straying stand at length
Amazed before a vast cathedral's door.
Immense it rises there, in conscious strength
That many a tempest bore.
On the threshold swift I pause:
Sound of ghostly footsteps awes
My eager feet that would an entrance
win,
Bids me kneel and murmur low
Prayers of reverence, as I know
What holy thoughts, what wisdom dwell
therein.

This is the home of high Teutonic speech
Where beauty's sacred fire forever glows.
Upon the Edda's broad foundation rose
The soaring columns vaulted each to each,

And Goethe, Shakespeare, Ibsen reach
Their spans across the hall:
And over all
 A dome that holds the light,
The Master-Man, whose messagemystical
 Bade us be bold and laugh and seize
 delight,
 Before he vanished into endless night
At Zarathustra's call!

Of song is made the painted windows' sheen,
The lustre of the lamps,
 The tapestries shot with gold:
On each his own design some singer stamps,
 The very stones have voices, that pro-
 claim
The Magic City and uphold
Her deathless fame.

The Holy of Holies is this place;
Some hanging that the wall may grace
 To weave with care,
Or with the smoking censer pace,
 Or do least service in that blessed throng
Is to claim kinship with God's saints and wear
The martyr's crown of song.



THE HAUNTED HOUSE

THE HAUNTED HOUSE

I LAY beside you . . . on your lips the while
Hovered, most strange . . . the mirage of a
smile,

Such as a minstrel lover might have seen
Upon the visage of some antique queen—
Flickering like flame, half choked by wind and
dust,

Weary of all things saving song and lust.

How many days and years and lovers' lies
Gave you your knowledge? You are very wise
And tired, yet insatiate to the last.

These things I thought, but said not; and there
passed

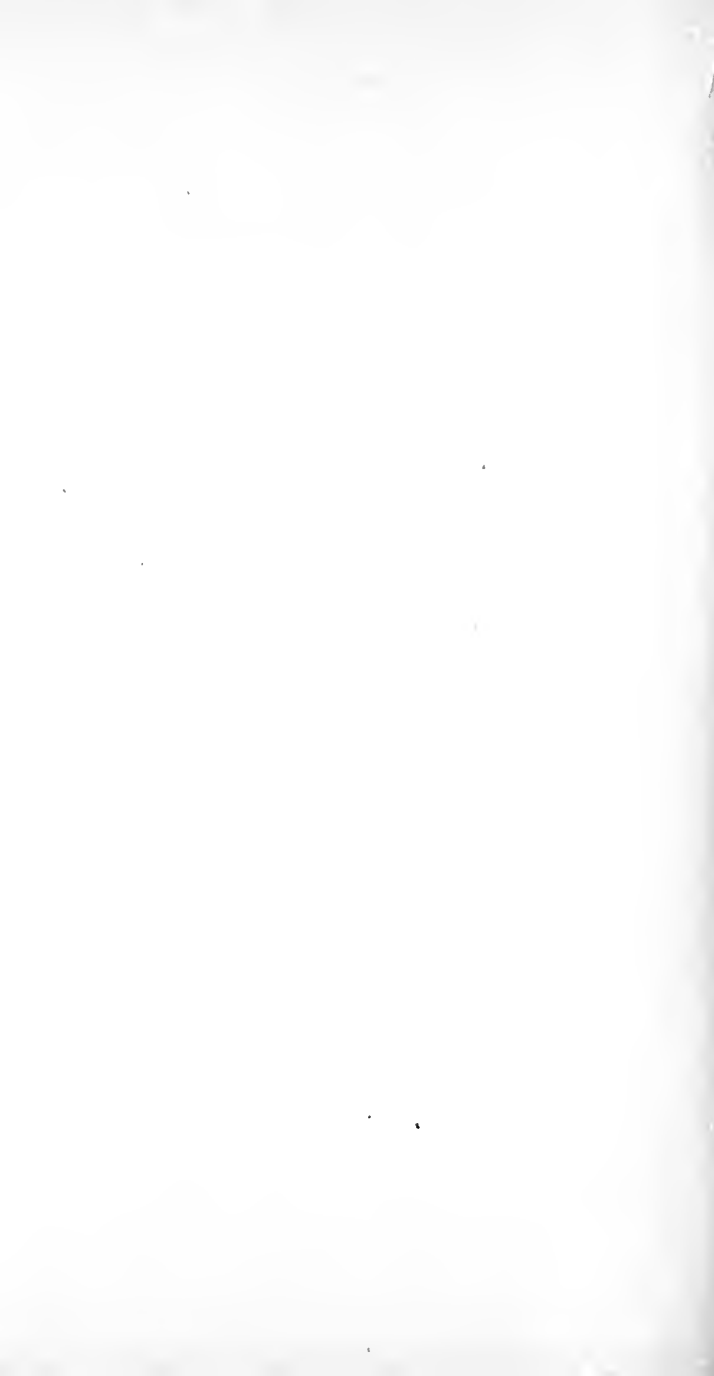
Before my vision in voluptuous quest,
The pageant of the lovers who possessed
Your soul and body even as I possess,
Who marked your passion in its nakedness
And all your love-sins when your love was new.

They saw as I your quivering breast, and drew
Nearer to the consuming flame that burns
Deep to the marrow of my bone, and turns
My heart to love even as theirs who knew
From head to girdle each sweet curve of you,
Each little way of loving. No caress,
But apes the part of former loves. Ah yes,

Even thus your hand toyed in the locks of him
Who came before me. Was he fair of limb
Or very dark? What matter, with such lures
You snared the heart of all your paramours!

To-night I feel the presence of the others,
Your lovers were they and are now my brothers.
And I have nothing that has not been theirs,
No single bloom the tree of passion bears
They have not plucked. Beloved, can it be?
Is there no gift that you reserve for me—
No loving kindness or no subtle sin,
No secret shrine that none has entered in,
Whither no mocking memories pursue
Love's wistful pilgrim? I am weary too,
With weariness of all your lovers, and when
I follow in the ways of other men,
I know each spot of your sweet body is
A cross, the tombstone of some perished kiss.
My arms embrace you, and a silent host
Of shadows rises—at each side a ghost!
With all its beauty and its faultless grace
Your body, dearest, is a haunted place.
When I did yield to passion's swift demand,
One of your lovers touched me with his hand.
And in the pang of amorous delight
I hear strange voices calling through the night.

THE THREE SPHINXES



THE THREE SPHINXES

BEFORE the image older than the world,
Or ill or good,
By Titan hand into the desert hurled,
In the Egyptian sunset musing stood—
Long having travelled by fantastic roads
Where in deep sands the tremulous foot-
step sinks—
The oldest and the youngest of the gods,
Saying:
“Upon my life has fallen thy shadow,
O Sphinx!”

Replied the Sphinx: “O son of Aphrodite,
Shall wisdom teach thee how the soul is won,
Or the hot sands be balsam on thy lids?
Behold approach from Thebes and Babylon,
Huge birds grotesque against the falling
gloom,
My far-come younger sisters.” And a mighty
Thunder of pinions shook the pyramids,
And made the mummies mumble in their
tomb.

The three stern sisters of the mystery
Enduring and miraculously wrought
In granite and in porphyry,
Then, holding concourse in the desert,
spake

With the great sound of billows on the sea
That rumble as they break:

“Thou, Eros, art the eternal riddle, we
Are but in stone the semblance of thy
thought.”

Limbed like the panther, featured like a man,
The wisest of the Sphinxes thus began,
That still had waited where the river steams
And winds the caravan:

“In my brain’s cavern seven cubits span
Dwell visions splendidous
Of the great lords of song and thought
and might,
Who in the large eyes of Antinous
Have read the Deeper Light.
Upon my lashes gleams
Still Shakespeare’s rhythmic tear;
Here Plato musing dreamed his dreams
Of spirit-passion; David here
In the long night-watch sang of Jonathan.”

Then rose the winged Theban, figure dual
Of maid and lion strangely wed;
"I am the blood that tingles, and the jewel
Of all the world's desire adorns my head—
The lithe-limbed youths that fell for Hel-
en's sake
Have died for me,
The lads that wake
To ripeness curse me as they ache
Beneath my tyranny.
My mandates sweet and cruel
Nor prayer nor penance shall revoke:
I am the flame, men's bodies are the fuel,
Men's souls the smoke."

The pinioned Sphinx of Babylon,
Human in naught, Lord Eros thus addressed:
"Wherever men have spat thy face upon
Or sought strange pleasure in unholy quest,
My breath had made them mad.
I am the dream that Nero's mother had
Ere burned his natal star.
I am the ghastly vision of de Sade:
Astarte and Priapus wage
War for my beauty monstrous, bar-
ren, bare;
The Cretan knew me and from far
My image fell upon the crimson page
Of Swinburne and of Baudelaire."

The silence shivered as in tearless woe
When they had done, the Foam-begotten
broke
Across his knee the sceptre and the bow:
"The empyrean is beyond your reach,
Your substance earth of earth,
And even she that called on Plato's
name
Bears soilure of a mortal birth
The triple mirror are you of my
shame
Half-beast are two, one wholly beast, in
each
Is something bestial, and your wings' winds
choke
Within my heart the unadulterate
flame."

But the three Sphinxes mighty murmuring
Thus answer made: "O Love,
Turn thou thy wrath above,
Where round God's throne the cosmic sunsets
fling
The light that shall not fade.
Beneath his feet the countless æons roll,
His slow relentless purpose knows the
goal
Of things, and joining flesh and spirit made
A beast the mansion of the soul."

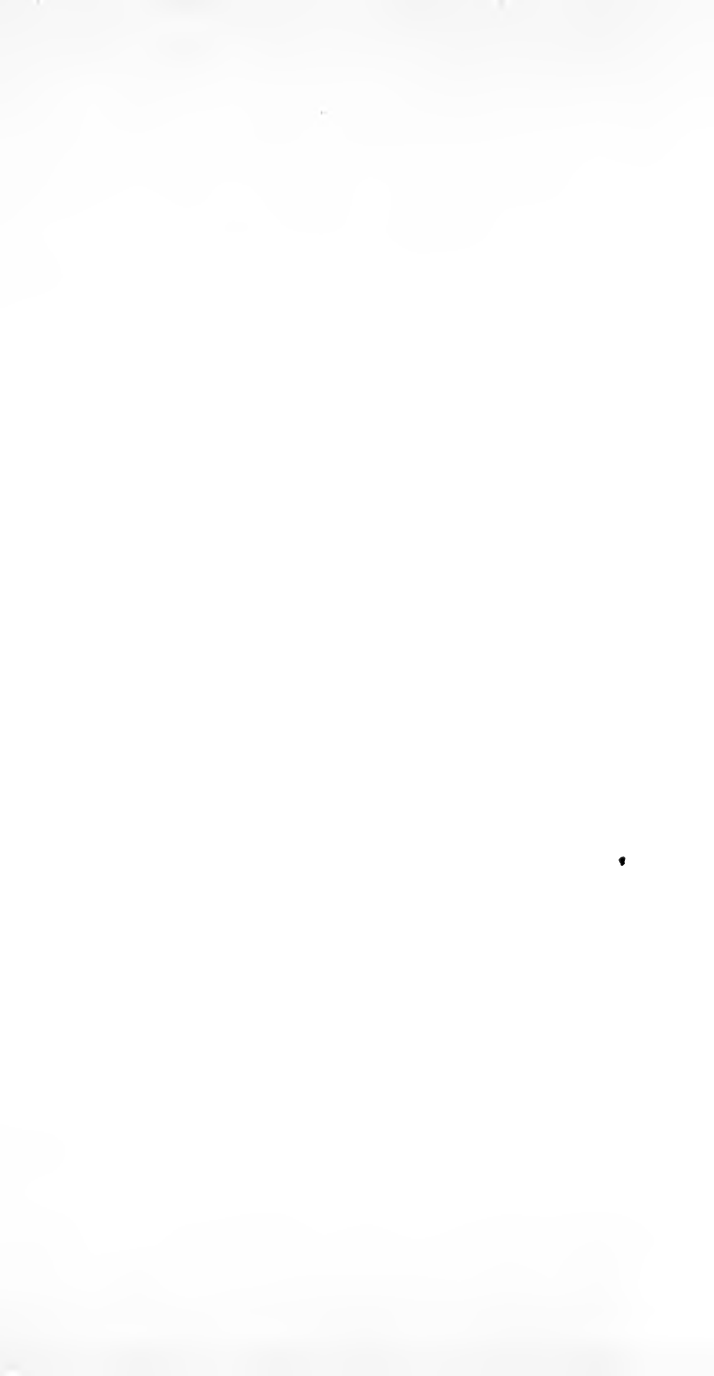
And lo, the spring's breath faded from Love's
charm,

The sunshine from his hair,
And in his arm

The arrows turned to rods.

He heeded not the silent years that
crawl

Like uncouth spiders. Weary, cynical,
Self-conscious, disenchanted stood he there,
The oldest and the saddest of the gods.



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